WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A system for providing access to array of guide pages from an interactive program guide within constraints imposed by limited bandwidth available in a distribution network, the system comprising:

a distribution control center coupled to the distribution network;

a session manager in the distribution control center for monitoring and controlling usage of demand-cast stream bandwidth within the distribution network; and

a transport stream generator for receiving demand-cast stream usage information from the session manager and using said information to control which demand-cast streams are multiplexed into a transport stream for transmission to a plurality of terminals via the distribution network.

2.   The system of claim 1, wherein the plurality of terminals are coupled to a node within the distribution network, and said transport stream is transmitted from the transport stream generator to said node.

3.   The system of claim 1, wherein the session manager receives demand-cast stream acquisition, release, and request messages from the plurality of terminals.

4.   The system of claim 3, wherein said acquisition, release, and request messages are transmitted via out-of-band communications.

5.   The system of claim 1, wherein the transport stream includes a list of available demand-cast streams, and said list is used by a terminal in determining whether a stream with a particular guide page may be acquired immediately or needs to be requested.

6.   The system of claim 5, wherein an acquisition message is sent from the terminal to the session manager if the stream is acquired, and a request message is sent from the terminal to the session manager if the stream needs to be requested.

7.   The system of claim 6, wherein a release message is sent from the terminal to the session manager once the terminal is no longer acquiring the stream.

1   8.   The system of claim 1, wherein the session manager tracks

2 demand-cast streams that are acquired by at least one terminal by maintaining a dynamic

3 list of terminals that are presently acquiring each demand-cast stream.

1   9.   The system of claim 8, wherein the session manager informs the

2 transport stream generator when a terminal request a demand-cast stream which is not

3 present in the transport stream.

1   10.   The system of claim 9, wherein the session manager informs the

2 transport stream generator when there is no longer any terminals acquiring the demand-

3 cast stream.

1   11.   The system of claim 1, wherein the distribution control center

2 comprises a cable headend.

1   12.   The system of claim 1, wherein the transport stream generator is

2 co-located with the session manager at the distribution control center.

1   13.   The system of claim 1, wherein the transport stream generator is

2 located separately from the session manager.

1   14.   A session manager for monitoring and controlling usage of

2 demand-cast bandwidth within a distribution network, the session manager comprising:

3   a monitoring module for receiving acquisition, release, and request

4 messages from a plurality of terminals;

5   a tracking module for maintaining a dynamic list of terminals that are

6 presently acquiring each demand-cast stream; and

7   a controlling module for informing the transport stream generator when a

8 terminal requests a demand-cast stream which is not present in the transport stream and

9 for informing the transport stream generator when there is no longer any terminals

10 acquiring the demand-cast stream.

1   15.   A transport stream generator, said stream generator comprising:

2   an interface to a session manager for receiving demand-cast stream usage

3 information from the session manager;

4   a multiplexer for multiplexing demand-cast streams into a transport stream

5 for transmission to a plurality of terminals via a distribution network; and

6   a controller for controlling which demand-cast streams are multiplexed

7 into the transport stream using the demand-cast stream usage information.